

Old Madrid.' Young ALFONSO's coronation by the side of the Manzanares will be, so to speak, the overture to the vaster celebrations which on June 26 are to take place near the water of the Thames.

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ALFONSO XIII. was a bright little two-year-old when our eyes first alighted upon him in 1888. He is now a slender, alert, pale, delicate-looking lad, high-spirited, a bit overstrung, perhaps, devoted to his religion, as becomes the carefully nurtured son of a pious mother, and—a good omen for the stability of his reign, be it long or short—popular with the army and with the high-placed generals because of his well-known ardor in the study of military science. Young ALFONSO has seen but little of the side of life that appeals to the average boy. His pupillary stage has been almost as Spartan in its simplicity and devotion to hard work as that of the scions of the royal house of Prussia. 'He is already,' says a well-informed Madrid correspondent, writing some few months ago, 'handicapped by his responsibilities. An English lad at 15 years, whatever his position, would not be carrying half the load of knowledge borne by ALFONSO XIII. He speaks English, French, and German, as well as Spanish, has had a careful mathematical training, is a student of history, and is devoted to military matters. For a boy his knowledge of the elements of military science is quite uncommon. A very robust body, free from all tendency to illness, might carry this load; the slight figure of the young King suggests the need for less strenuous effort. When next May he takes office and becomes at least the nominal head of the State, how will he endure the additional burden? Apart from the sentiment of sympathy with a lad who is called upon to undertake a task so onerous as that of Spanish rule, the question appeals to Spain from the Pyrenees to Andalusia. The health of the King and the consequent tranquility of the State are matters of the first importance to the country.'

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The Boy-King of Spain has no easy row to hoe. Radicals, Republicans, Carlists constitute an element of danger that is neutralised only by the mutual repugnance of its various sections and by the promise of fidelity on the part of the army. Matters have, however, changed enormously for the better in Spain since the days when almost every change of Ministry took place to the theatrical accompaniment of a *pronunciamiento*. ALFONSO has been adopting a conciliatory attitude towards opponents and irreconcilables; the financial condition of Spain has greatly improved during the four years that have elapsed since the war with the United States; the country's resources are being opened up; there has been a great expansion of her over-sea commerce, and an unexampled purchase of shipping to fly the flag of Leon and Castile; and there is something like the awakening of a new spirit in that grand old Catholic land which, we trust, will undo the work of a hoary tradition of evil government and bring back to Spain some of her departed glories.

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Spain is a bleeding example of the power of a series of bad Governments to work the ruin of a country. St. TERESA thanked God for having bestowed upon her country a rich soil and a glorious climate. She prayed God to add to all this the gift of a good Government. This crowning gift Providence withheld, and Louis XIV.'s cruel saying was literally verified: 'After a century of bad Government there was under CHARLES II. no government at all.' The battered kingdom over which the youthful ALFONSO is to rule has had two periods of decay, followed by two swift but short-lived recoveries. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries witnessed the most woful decline in her history—a decline which affects her fortunes to the present hour. The eighteenth century (1759-1788) saw a brief revival. It was blighted by the long war that raved and raged and slew at the close of the eighteenth, and the early part of the nineteenth, century, which led to the loss of her South American colonies. This, in turn, was succeeded by a reaction of prosperity, which was broken up by the Carlist wars, the ten years' insurrection in Cuba (1868-1878), and the series of crises which led to the brief and decisive struggle with the United States. Spain's first decline of national prosperity arose out of what was and is her proudest glory—the dis-

covery of the New World. Other causes combined therewith to aggravate and prolong a situation which at last reduced Spain from being the richest and most powerful country in Europe to her present position as a second-rate power. Briefly stated, these causes were (1) the loss of population brought about by emigration to the newly-discovered America, (2) excessive taxation, (3) long-continued foreign wars, and (4) the partial abandonment of manual labor, caused by social and not by religious influences.

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It would be manifestly impossible, in the course of a leading article, to deal, except in the most summary way, with the wide ranges of causes of decay just indicated. The rush to the new El Dorado beyond the Atlantic ruined the mother country. The expulsion of the Moors from Granada also depopulated a portion of the nation. It interfered with the progress of agriculture, and recalls to mind the driving of the Irish 'to hell or Connaught' under CROMWELL, and the deportation of the French colonists from their homes in Nova Scotia by Governor LAWRENCE a century later. By the time of PHILIP IV. the population of the country had fallen to about six millions. The displacement of population resulted in a serious disturbance of economic conditions. The prices of labor and of commodities went up enormously in Spain. The ordinary relations of commerce were unhinged. The statesmen of the day were unable to cope with the economic revolution which a few years had wrought. The flourishing silk and other industries were ruined by the *arbitristas*, by high protection, by foolish edicts against the export of silk, gold, etc., and by excessive taxation. Agriculture was also ruined by excessive increase of mortmain property and entailed estates (*mayorals*), and by the abandonment of manual occupations by the *Pecheños* of the southern plains, who wished to imitate the 'gentleman's life' of the old free *Hidalgos* who had never bowed to Moorish sway. The addle-headed economic system referred to in this paragraph was in force from the days of CHARLES V. to PHILIP V.—nearly two hundred years. No nation could have survived such government.

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We have referred to war as a determining factor in Spain's decay. It is sufficient to merely refer to the war policy of PHILIP II. and PHILIP IV.—the wars in the Netherlands; the wars against the Turks; against Barbary; the disastrous expedition of the Armada; the raids of English privateers, like Sir FRANCIS DRAKE, on the West Indian possessions of Spain; and the later struggles against Great Britain and France. These long-drawn struggles—likewise the later Carlist troubles—exhausted the exchequer and impoverished the country. The loss of her magnificent possessions in South America followed fast upon the Peninsular War. Between 1810 and 1825 she lost practically the whole of South America. The loss of such an empire would cause any nation to reel. It is needless to say that religion had nothing to do with creating the situation. The happy and prosperous condition of the intensely Catholic Basque provinces—which were protected by their *fueros*, or ancient laws, against excessive taxation, and by their mountain fastnesses against the horrors of many a war—is a sufficient answer to the shallow journalists and callow pulpiters who feel disposed to attribute Spain's decay to some nameless action of the Church. The young ALFONSO XIII. receives his royal crown at a moment when his hard-trying country is shuffling off the evils created by a long series of evil civil Governments—many of the worst of which, during the course of the nineteenth century, were intensely and aggressively anti-Catholic. We trust that the light of returning prosperity which is breaking once more on that beautiful but ill-governed country will grow and broaden, and that the stripling who on Saturday receives the royal crown upon his boyish brow may reign long and happily over a peaceful, contented, and thriving people.

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